
Name of Organization: United Citizens Association, Inc.

Type of Organization: Other

Contact Information: Mr. Stephen Shay

2148 Superior Avenue

Whiting IN 46394

Phone: (219) 473 - 1677 **Extension:**

Fax: (219) 937 - 1984

E-Mail: dabertin@netnitco.net

Project Title: CITIZEN ADVISORY PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

Project Category: Emerging Issues

Rank by Organization (if applicable): 0

Total Funding Requested (\$): 30,000 **Project Duration:** 1.5 Years

Abstract:

Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs) are often used in addressing Great Lakes issues and projects. Oftentimes, these CACs function under the control of, and are limited by, those entities that are advocating a certain project (e.g. government or industry). Citizen members of CACs are rarely given the resources to function independently and seek their own information. This project proposes using outside consultants to provide professional assistance to a CAC. Specifically, this proposal requests funds to provide outside facilitation and support for the CAC associated with the George Lake Restoration Project, a complex environmental restoration effort located in Northwest Indiana.

Geographic Areas Affected by the Project

States:

<input type="checkbox"/> Illinois	<input type="checkbox"/> New York
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/> Pennsylvania
<input type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> Wisconsin
<input type="checkbox"/> Minnesota	<input type="checkbox"/> Ohio

Lakes:

<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Erie
<input type="checkbox"/> Huron	<input type="checkbox"/> Ontario
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> All Lakes

Geographic Initiatives:

☒ Greater Chicago ☐ NE Ohio ☒ NW Indiana ☐ SE Michigan ☐ Lake St. Clair

Primary Affected Area of Concern: Grand Calumet River/IHC, IN

Other Affected Areas of Concern:

For Habitat Projects Only:

Primary Affected Biodiversity Investment Area: Not Applicable

Other Affected Biodiversity Investment Areas:

Problem Statement:

The use of Citizen Advisory Committees or "CACs" is a common practice for many environmental projects within the Great Lakes Basin. This is especially true in northwest Indiana. The effectiveness of CACs has been limited, in part, because of a lack of information resources available to CACs and the resulting lack of independence and authority. Oftentimes, citizens and community members are asked to participate and provide advice concerning an environmental project, but they are not provided with information necessary to offer educated and informed opinions. In many instances citizens are provided information only through those persons advocating a position or project. This situation can result in the appearance of bias and a general lack of participation and cooperation between partners.

Navigating through the complicated web of environmental law, regulation, and science can be daunting for even highly trained professionals. Educating lay volunteers on a variety of environmental issues requires considerable time and effort.

By providing contract environmental consultants directly to the selected CAC, this project will empower citizens and allow them to participate on a "level playing field" with representatives of government and industry.

Proposed Work Outcome:

The George Lake Watershed Restoration Project encompasses approximately 350 acres and is located in Hammond, Indiana. The project proposes to restore George Lake, a 150 acre natural waterbody, preserve natural areas near the lake, eliminate pollution sources, and re-use former industrial property as a golf course/public recreation area. The completion of this project will require dealing with a variety of environmental issues including brownfield re-use, RCRA hazardous waste laws, wetland permitting, Clean Water Act regulations, and a host of other complicated environmental issues. While a Citizens Advisory Committee has been appointed to assist in the project, current project resources do not allow for any funding for the citizen members of the CAC.

The project proposed here will use the George Lake Citizens Advisory Committee to study the results of empowering a CAC with independent resources. This project will provide insight into, and an understanding of, the role of CACs in environmental projects. A facilitator will be hired to work with all members of the committee. Consultants will also be hired to provide information directly to CAC members concerning environmental matters addressed by the restoration project.

Project Milestones:**Dates:**

Project Start

06/2000

Hire facilitator

07/2000

Hire environmental consultants

08/2000

Meetings/work sessions

09/2000

Prepare final report

11/2001

/

/

Project End

12/2001

☒ Project Addresses Environmental Justice**If So, Description of How:**

The George Lake Restoration Project is located in the heart of a socially diverse community. To date, the project has attempted to reach as many local citizens as possible. However, the resources requested by this grant proposal are key to reaching a even greater public. At present, public outreach activities are limited because of a lack of funds dedicated to that purpose. The grant dollars requested here will be used to reach out to the entire community. The economically disadvantaged lack financial resources to seek out information concerning environmental matters. A very core goal of this project is to provide those citizens who cannot afford access to independent resources, the opportunity to obtain information and assistance from their own chosen sources.

☒ Project Addresses Education/Outreach**If So, Description of How:**

A primary purpose of this project is to provide education to citizens. In turn, this information will be used to help them make educated decisions about their community. Specific educational activities envisioned by the project proposed here include monthly meetings, work sessions, as well as access to consultants and professional services. A major goal of this project is to provide as much education as necessary to allow citizens to actively participate in the decision-making process.

Project Budget:

	Federal Share Requested (\$)	Applicant's Share (\$)
Personnel:	0	9,000
Fringe:	0	0
Travel:	0	0
Equipment:	0	500
Supplies:	0	500
Contracts:	30,000	0
Construction:	0	0
Other:	0	0
Total Direct Costs:	30,000	10,000
Indirect Costs:	0	0
Total:	30,000	10,000
Projected Income:	0	0

Funding by Other Organizations (Names, Amounts, Description of Commitments):

The UCA obtains its funding through government grants, private foundations, and fund raising activities. Sources of funding for this project include organization funds earmarked for this project and some in-kind assistance.

Description of Collaboration/Community Based Support:

The George Lake Restoration project has many partners. The project's major proponent is the City of Hammond, Indiana. Upon completion the properties making up the project will be owned and managed by the City of Hammond. The current CAC has citizen representatives. Under the project proposed here, the committee may expand to include other persons and organizations. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources have participated in planning meetings and have provided funding for the project. The project has also received the support of the United States Environmental Protection Agency.